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IMMEDIATE WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS: PLEASE PASS TO SSS SAN CLEMENTE FOR SECRETARY ROGERS

Rogers, William P.

EXDIS

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RCB

SAN CLEMENTE COMMUNICATIONS: PLEASE PASS TO STATE SY ESCORTS WALTER SARGENT OR WILLIAM D'URSO AT THE OPENING OF BUSINESS FOR SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS

FOLLOWING IS EVENING REPORT FOR JULY 30, 1970:

(1) SENATOR PERCY BRIEFING ON ABM - THIS MORNING SECRETARY ROGERS TALKED WITH SENATOR PERCY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ABM TO SALT. HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE THE SENATOR TO HAVE THE FULL BENEFIT OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS AND WAS ASKING ASSISTANT SECRETARY ABSHIRE TO ARRANGE FOR SUCH A BRIEFING. LATER IN THE DAY, MR. ABSHIRE, TOGETHER WITH RAY S. CLINE, DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH, AND LEON SLOSS, BUREAU OF POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS, SPENT AN HOUR AND A QUARTER WITH SENATOR PERCY. AS A RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, THE SENATOR SAID HE DID RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF ABM TO THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS, BUT CONTINUED TO ARGUE HIS LEGISLATIVE COMPROMISE PROPOSALS DESPITE MR. ABSHIRE'S STRONG REITERATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S FIRM STAND. MR. ABSHIRE ASKED THAT THERE BE FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS TO WHICH THE SENATOR AGREED.

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The modified Sentinel program is designed to fulfill the following objectives:

1. Protection for our land-based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by the Soviet Union.

2. Defense of our heavily populated areas against the kind of attack Communist China is likely to be able to mount within the decade.

3. Protection against the possibility of accidental or irrational attack from any source.

The program involves a phased deployment schedule closely aligned with the emerging Chinese and Soviet threats. Construction for the initial phase will take place at two of our Minuteman fields: Malmstrom AFB, Montana and Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota. Construction of radars and deployment of missiles at these sites is scheduled to be completed in four years.

The components of the system consist of (1) Perimeter Acquisition Radars for long-range detection of any kind of nuclear attack; (2) Missile Site Radars, for accurate guidance of the defense missiles to the incoming weapons; (3) Spartan missiles, for high altitude interception of attacking weapons, (4) Sprint missiles, for lower altitude interception in the atmosphere to provide local protection.

Total investment costs for the full deployment will be about $6.6 billion, some $200 million more than Sentinel. However, budgetary requests for next year will be significantly less than what the previous Administration requested for Sentinel.

The full deployment schedule for the radars and missiles will be developed on the basis of careful assumptions of the threats existing at the time.

Completion of the system will provide:

1. Significant local protection for part of our Minuteman force plus the option for further expansion if threat justifies it.

2. Virtually complete area protection of the U.S. against the early Chinese ICBM threat or against irrational attack by any country.

3. Area protection for strategic bomber bases against attack from ballistic missile submarines or semi-orbital weapons.

4. Significant protection for National Command Authorities against a moderately heavy attack. [redacted]

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COMPARISON OF PRESIDENT'S BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAM WITH SENTINEL PROGRAM

CONCEPT

President's Program

Program is designed to fulfill three objectives:

1. Protection for our land based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by the Soviet Union.

2. Defense of our heavily populated areas against the kind of attack Communist China is likely to be able to mount within the decade.

3. Protection against the possibility of accidental or irrational attack from any source.

Sentinel

Primary purpose: defense of the U.S. against the early Chinese ICBM threat.

Secondary purpose: provide some local defense for Minuteman forces and the option to install full local protection of our Minuteman force if the threat materialized.

MISSIONS

1. Defense of Minuteman

Provide significant local protection for part of our Minuteman force plus option for further expansion if the threat materializes.

Provided minimal defense of Minuteman and an option for additional defense.

2. Area Defense

Complete protection against early, unsophisticated Chinese ICBM threat, or against irrational attack by any country. Some protection against more sophisticated Chinese threat. Extensive area defense in all directions.

Area protection against attack from the North, i.e., China only.

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MISSIONS (continued)

2. Area Defense (continued)

By reducing number and relocating radar and missile sites and by enabling radars to look other than Northward, provides protection for bomber bases and cities against Soviet submarine launched or orbital space launched attacks. Radars and missiles will be relocated away from cities.

No significant area protection of bombers or cities against attacks from Soviet ballistic missile submarines (SLBMs) or fractional orbital bombardment systems (FOBS). Radar and missile sites near cities.

3. Defense of National Command Authorities

Has significant protection for principal National Command Authorities against moderately heavy attack.

Provided no more than for rest of country.

4. Protection or Damage Limitation Against USSR

Still very limited, but better directional coverage.

No organic basis for later installation of a cities defense.

Very limited and only against attacks from North; not designed for this purpose. However, maintains option of cities defense against Soviet threat.

5. Protection Against Accidental or Irrational Attack

Complete protection against such attacks from any source.

Protection against such attacks from North only.

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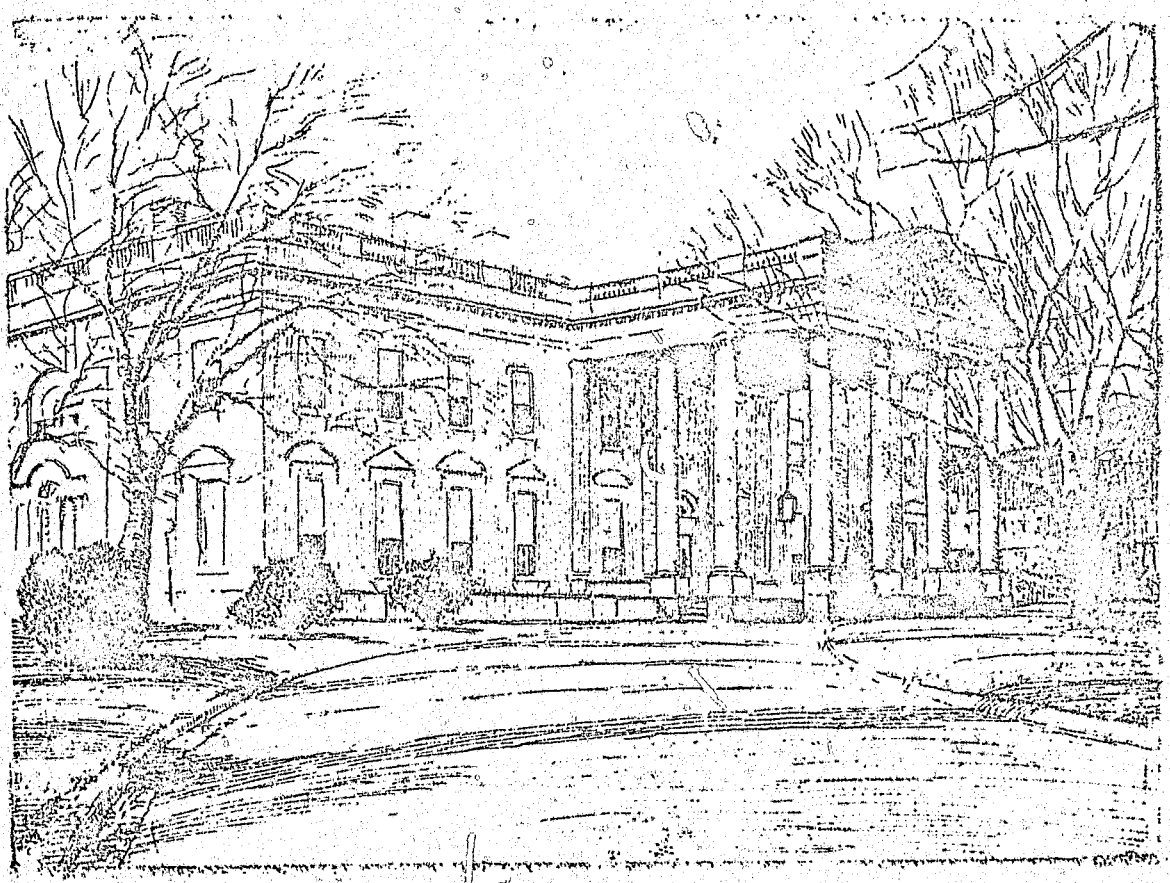
STENOTYPE TRANSCRIPT
OF
PRESS CONFERENCE



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PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 4

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

12:00 Noon
March 14, 1969
Friday

In The East Room
At The White House
Washington, D. C.

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, today I am announcing a decision which I believe is vital for the security and defense of the United States, and also in the interest of peace throughout the world.

Last year a program, the SENTINEL antiballistic missile program, was adopted. That program, as all listeners on television and radio and readers of newspapers know, has been the subject of very strong debate and controversy over the past few months.

After long study of all of the options available, I have concluded that the SENTINEL program previously adopted should be substantially modified. The new program that I have recommended this morning to the leaders, and that I announce today, is one that perhaps best can be described as a safeguard program.

It is a safeguard against any attack by the Chinese Communists that we can foresee over the next 10 years.

It is a safeguard of our deterrent system, which is increasingly vulnerable due to the advances that have been made by the Soviet Union since the year 1967 when the SENTINEL program was first laid out.

It is a safeguard also against any irrational or accidental attack that might occur of less than massive magnitude which might be launched from the Soviet Union.

The program also does not do some things which should be clearly understood. It does not provide defense for our cities, and for that reason the sites have been moved away from our major cities. I have made the decision with regard to this particular point because I found that there is no way, even if we were to expand the limited SENTINEL system which was planned for some of our cities to a so-called heavy or thick system -- there is no way that we can adequately defend our cities without an unacceptable loss of life.

The only way that I have concluded that we can save lives, which is the primary purpose of our defense system, is to prevent war, and that is why the emphasis of this system is on protecting our deterrent, which is the best preventive for war.

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The system differs from the previous SENTINEL system in another major respect. The SENTINEL system called for a fixed deployment schedule. I believe that because of a number of reasons, we should have a phase system. That is why, on an annual basis, the new safeguard system will be reviewed, and the review may bring about changes in the system based on our evaluation of three major points.

First, what our intelligence shows us with regard to the magnitude of the threat, whether from the Soviet Union or from the Chinese; and, second, in terms of what our evaluation is of any talks that we are having by that time, or may be having, with regard to arms control; and, finally because we believe that since this is a new system, we should constantly examine what progress has been made in the development of the technique to see if changes in the system should be made.

I should admit at this point that this decision has not been an easy one. None of the great decisions made by a President are easy. But it is one that I have made after considering all of the options, and I would indicate before going to your questions two major options that I have overruled.

One is moving to a massive city defense. I have already indicated why I do not believe that is, first, feasible, and there is another reason. Moving to a massive city defense system, even starting with a thin system and then going to a heavy system, tends to be more provocative in terms of making credible a first-strike capability against the Soviet Union. I want no provocation which might deter arms talks.

The other alternative, at the other extreme, was to do nothing, or to delay for six or twelve months, which would be the equivalent, really, of doing nothing, or, for example, going the road only of research and development.

I have examined those options. I have ruled them out because I have concluded that the first deployment of this system, which will not occur until 1973, that that first deployment is essential by that date if we are to meet the threat that our present intelligence indicates will exist by 1973.

In other words, we must begin now. If we delay a year, for example, it means that that first deployment will be delayed until 1975. That might be too late.

It is the responsibility of the President of the United States, above all other responsibilities, to think first of the security of the United States. I believe that this system is the best step that we can take to provide for that security.

There are, of course, other possibilities that have been strongly urged by some of the leaders this morning -- for example that we could increase our offensive capability, our submarine force, or even our MINUTEMAN force or our bomber force. That I would consider to be, however, the wrong road

because it would be provocative to the Soviet Union and might escalate an arms race.

This system is truly a safeguard system, a defensive system only. It safeguards our deterrent and under those circumstances can, in no way, in my opinion, delay the progress which I hope will continue to be made toward arms talks, which will limit arms, not only this kind of system, but particularly offensive systems.

We will now go to your questions.

Mr. Smith?

QUESTION: Mr. President, the war in Vietnam has been intensifying recently, and if there has been any notable progress in Paris it has not been detectible publicly. Is your patience growing a little thin with these continued attached, particularly such as came out of the DMZ today?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Smith, you may recall that on March 4 when I received a similar question, at an earlier stage of the attacks, I issued what was interpreted widely as a warning. It will be my policy as President to issue a warning only once, and I will not repeat it now. Anything in the future that is done will be done. There will be no additional warning.

As far as the Paris talks are concerned, I have noted the speculation in the press with regard to whether we will have, or should have, or are, for example, approving private talks going forward. I will not discuss that subject. I trust there will be private talks.

I think that is where this war will be settled -- in private rather than in public. This is in the best interest of both sides, but public discussion of what I think is significant progress which is being made along the lines of private talks, I will not indulge in.

Mr. Cormier?

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QUESTION: Mr. President, will you make your own State of the Union address, and what will your legislative program encompass?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not plan a State of the Union address in the traditional manner. I will, within approximately a month, however, state a general domestic program. By that time the program will be at the point that I think it should be completely summarized and set forth, not only for the Nation, as to what we have done, but particularly to the Congress as to what we expect for the balance. I would not want to anticipate now what will be in that program.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there has been a great deal of criticism in Congress against deployment of any type of antiballistic defense system. What kind of reception do you think your proposal this morning will receive there?

THE PRESIDENT: It will be a very spirited debate, and it will be a very close vote. Debates in the field of national defense are often spirited and the votes are often close. Many of my friends in Congress who were there before I was there remarked that the vote on extending the draft in 1941 won by only one vote.

This might be that close. I think, however, that after the Members of the House and the Senate consider this program, which is a minimum program, and which particularly provides options to change in other directions if we find the threat is changed, or that the art has changed, our evaluation of the technique has changed, I think that we have a good chance of getting approval. We will, of course, express our views, and we hope that we will get support from the country.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I understand that your first construction or deployment of antimissile systems would be around two MINUTEMAN retaliatory operations. Do you think that deploying around these two provides enough deterrent that would be effective?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me explain the difference between deploying around two MINUTEMAN bases and deploying around, say, 10 cities.

Where you are looking toward a city defense, it needs to be a perfect or near perfect system to be credible because, as I examine the possibility of even a thick defense of cities, I have found that even the most optimistic projections, considering the highest development of the art, would mean that we would still lose 30 million to 40 million lives. That would be less than half of what we would otherwise lose. But we would still lose 30 million to 40 million.

When you are talking about protecting your deterrent, it need not be perfect. It is necessary only to protect enough of the deterrent that the retaliatory second strike will be of such magnitude that the enemy would think twice before launching a first strike.

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It has been my conclusion that by protecting two MINUTEMAN sites, we will preserve that deterrent as a credible deterrent, and that that will be decisive and could be decisive insofar as the enemy considering the possibility of a first strike.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been charges from Capitol Hill that you have stepped up the war in Vietnam. Have you?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not stepped up the war in Vietnam. I actually have examined not only the charges, but also examined the record. I discussed it at great length yesterday with Secretary Laird.

What has happened is this: For the past six months, the forces on the other side have been planning for an offensive, and for the past six months they not only have planned for an offensive, but they have been able, as a result of that planning, to have mounted a rather substantial offensive.

Under those circumstances, we had no other choice but to try to blunt the offensive. Had General Abrams not responded in this way, we would have suffered far more casualties than we have suffered, and we have suffered more than, of course, any of us would have liked to have seen.

The answer is that any escalation of the war in Vietnam has been the responsibility of the enemy. If the enemy de-escalates its attacks, ours will go down. We are not trying to step it up. We are trying to do everything that we can in the conduct of our war in Vietnam to see that we can go forward toward peace in Paris.

That is why my response has been measured, deliberate and, some think, too cautious. But it will continue to be that way, because I am thinking of those peace talks every time I think of a military option in Vietnam.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, your safeguard ABM system, I understand, would cost about $1 billion less in the coming fiscal year than the plan which President Johnson sent up. Would this give you the opportunity to reduce the surcharge or will the continued high level of taxation be needed for the economy?

THE PRESIDENT: That question will be answered when we see the entire budget. Secretary Laird will testify on the defense budget on Wednesday.

Incidentally, my understanding at this time, and I have seen the preliminary figures, is that the defense budget that Secretary Laird will present will be approximately $2-1/2 billion less than that submitted by the previous Administration.

Whether after considering the defense budget and all of the other budgets that have been submitted, we then can move in the direction of either reducing the surcharge or move in the direction of some of our very difficult problems with regard to our cities, the problem of hunger and others -- these are the options that I will have to consider at a later time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, last week you said that in the matter of Vietnam you would not tolerate heavier casualties and a continuation of the violation of the understanding without making an appropriate response.

Is what we are doing now in Vietnam in a military way that response of which you were speaking?

THE PRESIDENT: This is a very close decision on our part, one that I not only discussed with Secretary Laird yesterday, but that we will discuss more fully in the Security Council tomorrow.

I took no comfort out of the stories that I saw in the papers this morning to the effect that our casualties for the immediate past week went from 400 down to 300. That still is too high. What our response should be must be measured in terms of the effect on the negotiations in Paris. I will only respond as I did earlier to Mr. Smith's question. We issued a warning. I will not warn again. If we conclude that the level of casualties is higher than we should tolerate, action will take place.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you have reason to believe that the Russians will interpret your ABM decision today as not being an escalating move in the arms race?

THE PRESIDENT: As a matter of fact, Mr. Raplow, I have reason to believe, based on the past record, that they would interpret it just the other way around.

First, when they deployed their own ABM system, and, as you know, they have 57 missile ABM sites deployed around Moscow, they rejected the idea that it escalated the arms race on the ground that it was defensive solely in character, and, second, when the United States last year went

forward on the SENTINEL system, four days later the Soviet Union initiated the opportunity to have arms limitation talks.

I think the Soviet Union recognizes very clearly the difference between a defensive posture and an offensive posture.

I would also point this out, an interesting thing about Soviet military and diplomatic history: They have always thought in defensive terms, and if you read not only their political leaders, but their military leaders, the emphasis is on defense.

I think that since this system now, as a result of moving the city defense out of it, and the possibility of that city defense growing into a thick defense, I think this makes it so clearly defensive in character that the Soviet Union cannot interpret this as escalating the arms race.

QUESTION: Mr. President, last week at your press conference you mentioned negotiations with the Russians at the highest level being in the wind. Could you tell us if since then we have moved any closer to such a summit meeting?

THE PRESIDENT: I should distinguished between negotiations at what you call the highest level, and what I said was the highest level, and talks. Talks with the Soviet Union are going on at a number of levels at this time, on a number of subjects.

However, those talks have not yet reached the point where I have concluded, or where I believe they have concluded, that a discussion at the summit level would be useful. Whenever those talks, preliminary talks, do reach that point, I anticipate that a summit meeting would take place.

I do not think one will take place in the near future, but I think encouraging progress is being made toward the time when a summit talk may take place.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been several reports from your staff members that Kennedy and Johnson hold-over people who made policy have sown themselves into civil service status and this may mean some problem for you people in personnel. I wonder if this means that you will transfer a lot of these people or abolish jobs?

THE PRESIDENT: I have heard a lot from some of my Republican friends on Capitol Hill on this point, as well as from, of course, Republican leaders in the Nation. It seems that this is a rather common practice, when one Administration goes out and the other one comes in. We will do what we think will best serve the interest of effective Government, and if the individual who has been frozen in can do the job, we are going to keep him.

However, we are moving some out, but we wouldn't do it through subterfuge. We will try to do it quite directly.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, in your recent European trip, did you find any willingness on the part of our allies to increase their military and financial contribution to the alliance?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that matter was discussed with all of our allies, and particularly will be a subject for discussion when we have the 20th Anniversary meeting of NATO here in April.

I think it might be potentially embarrassing to allies to suggest that we are urging them, any one specifically, to do one thing or another in this field. I think it is best for me to leave it in these terms:

Our allies do recognize the necessity to maintain NATO's conventional forces. They do recognize that they must carry their share or that the United States, and particularly our Congress, representing our people, will have much less incentive to carry our share. I believe they will do their share, but I think we are going to do the best through quiet conversation rather than public declaration.

Yes, sir?

QUESTION: In any talks with the Soviet Union, would you be willing to consider abandoning the ABM program altogether if the Soviets showed a similar willingness or, indeed, if they showed a readiness to place limitations on offensive weapons?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Scali, I am prepared, in the event that we go into arms talks, to consider both offensive and defensive weapons. As you know, the arms talks, that at least preliminarily have been discussed, do not involve limitations or reduction. They involve only freezing where we are.

Your question goes to abandoning. On that particular point, I think it would take two, naturally, to make the agreement. Let's look at the Soviet Union's position with its defensive deployment of ABM's. Previously, that deployment was aimed only toward the United States. Today their radars, from our intelligence, are also directed toward Communist China.

I would imagine that the Soviet Union would be just as reluctant as we would be to leave their country naked against a potential Chinese Communist threat. So the abandoning of the entire system, particularly as long as the Chinese threat is there, I think neither country would look upon with much favor.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you think these developments of the Soviet Union and the United States are compatible with the aims of the NPT?

THE PRESIDENT: I considered that problem, and I believe that they are compatible with the NPT. We discussed that in the leaders' meeting this morning and I pointed out that as we consider this kind of defensive system, which enables the United States of America to make its deterrent

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capability credible, that that will have an enormous effect in reducing the pressure on other countries who might want to acquire nuclear weapons.

That is the key point. If a country doesn't feel that the major country that has a nuclear capability has a credible deterrent, then they would move in that direction.

One other point I wish to make, and make an announcement with regard to the NPT: that I was delighted to see the Senate's confirmation or consent to the treaty, and this announcement -- I hope President Johnson is looking. I haven't talked to him on the phone. I am going to invite President Johnson, if his schedule permits, to attend the ceremony when we will have the ratification of the treaty, because he started it in his Administration and I think he should participate when we ratify it.

Mr. Lisagor?

QUESTION: Mr. President, I wonder if I could turn to the campus disorders and unrest. They are continuing and we haven't had an opportunity to ask you your views of them. But particularly, would you favor the cutting off of Federal loans to the offenders?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Lisagor, I have asked the Attorney General and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to examine this problem, particularly in view of a Congressional report that 122 of the 540 who had been arrested at San Francisco State were direct recipients of Federal funds.

I will have a statement on that that I will be making either Monday or Tuesday, in detail. I would prefer not to go into it now.

Mr. Semple?

QUESTION: To follow up Mr. Bailey's question on Vietnam earlier, is there any evidence that your measured response to the enemy attacks in South Vietnam has produced or yielded any results in Paris or in the attitudes of the North Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi?

THE PRESIDENT: Our measured response has not had the effect of discouraging the progress, and it is very limited progress, toward talks in Paris. That is the negative side in answering your question.

As to whether or not a different response would either discourage those talks or might have the effect of even encouraging them is the decision that we now have to make.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, on Vietnam, in connection with Secretary Laird's visit, we have heard for sometime predictions that American troop levels could be cut as the South Vietnamese capabilities improve, and again last week, while he was in Vietnam, we were getting similar reports from Saigon despite the high level of the fighting that is going on now.

Do you see any prospect for withdrawing American troops in any numbers soon?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Bailey, in view of the current offensive on the part of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, there is no prospect for a reduction of American forces in the foreseeable future.

When we are able to reduce forces as a result of a combination of circumstances -- the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves in areas where we now are defending them; the progress of the talks in Paris; or the level of enemy activity -- when that occurs, I will make an announcement. But at this time there is no foreseeable prospect.

Mr. Theis?

QUESTION: What effect, if any, will your safeguard program have on the shelter program? Can you tell us anything about your long-range plans?

THE PRESIDENT: Congressman Holifield in the meeting this morning strongly urged that the Administration look over the shelter program and he made the point that he thought it had fallen somewhat into disarray due to lack of attention over the past few years.

I have directed that General Lincoln, the head of the Office of Emergency Preparedness -- I had directed him previously to conduct such a survey. We are going to look at the shelter program to see what we can do there in order to minimize American casualties.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I recall correctly, at the last press conference when you were discussing the meeting with General de Gaulle, and the Middle East situation, you said you were encouraged by what he told you, because he was moving closer to our position.

I wonder if you can tell us what our position is in the Middle East, and if it has changed significantly in the last year?

THE PRESIDENT: We have had bilateral talks not only with the French, but also with the Soviet Union, and with the British, preparatory to the possibility of four-power talks. I would not like to leave the impression that we are completely together at this point.

We are closer together than we were, but we still have a lot of yardage to cover. And until we make further progress in developing a common position, I would prefer not to lay out what our position is.

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I don't think that would be helpful in bringing them to the position that we think is the right position.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:30 P.M. EST)

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HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL AFTER 12:00 NOON E.S.T. MARCH 14, 1969

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

Immediately after assuming office, I requested the Secretary of Defense to review the program initiated by the last Administration to deploy the Sentinel Ballistic Missile Defense System.

The Department of Defense presented a full statement of the alternatives at the last two meetings of the National Security Council. These alternatives were reviewed there in the light of the security requirements of the U. S., and of their probable impact on East-West relations, with particular reference to the prospects for strategic arms negotiations.

After carefully considering the alternatives, I have reached the following conclusions: (1) the concept on which the Sentinel program of the previous Administration was based should be substantially modified, (2) the safety of our country requires that we should proceed now with the development and construction of the new system in a carefully phased program, (3) this program will be reviewed annually from the point of view of (a) technical developments, (b) the threat, (c) the diplomatic context including any talks on arms limitation.

The modified system has been designed so that its defensive intent is unmistakable. It will be implemented not according to some fixed, theoretical schedule, but in a manner clearly related to our periodic analysis of the threat. The first deployment covers two missile sites; the first of these will not be completed before 1973. Any further delay would set this date back by at least two additional years. The program for Fiscal Year 1970 is the minimum necessary to maintain the security of our Nation.

This measured deployment is designed to fulfill three objectives:

1. Protection of our land-based retaliatory forces against a direct attack by the Soviet Union;

2. Defense of the American people against the kind of nuclear attack which Communist China is likely to be able to mount within the decade.

3. Protection against the possibility of accidental attacks from any source.

In the review leading up to this decision, we considered three possible options in addition to this program: A deployment which would attempt to defend U.S. cities against an attack by the Soviet Union; a continuation of the Sentinel program approved by the previous Administration; and indefinite postponement of deployment while continuing Research and Development.

I rejected these options for the following reasons:

Although every instinct motivates me to provide the American people with complete protection against a major nuclear attack, it is not now within our power to do so. The heaviest defense system we considered, one designed to protect our major cities, still could not prevent a catastrophic level of U. S. fatalities from a deliberate all-out Soviet attack. And it might look to an opponent like the prelude to an offensive strategy threatening the Soviet deterrent.

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The Sentinel system approved by the previous Administration provided more capabilities for the defense of cities than the program I am recommending, but it did not provide protection against some threats to our retaliatory forces which have developed subsequently. Also, the Sentinel system had the disadvantage that it could be misinterpreted as the first step toward the construction of a heavy system.

Giving up all construction of missile defense poses too many risks. Research and Development does not supply the answer to many technical issues that only operational experience can provide. The Soviet Union has engaged in a build-up of its strategic forces larger than was envisaged in 1967 when the decision to deploy Sentinel was made. The following is illustrative of recent Soviet activity:

1. The Soviets have already deployed an ABM system which protects to some degree a wide area centered around Moscow. We will not have a comparable capability for over four years. We believe the Soviet Union is continuing their ABM development, directed either toward improving this initial system, or more likely, making substantially better second-generation ABM components.

2. The Soviet Union is continuing the deployment of very large missiles with warheads capable of destroying our hardened Minuteman forces.

3. The Soviet Union has also been substantially increasing the size of their submarine-launched ballistic missile force.

4. The Soviets appear to be developing a semi-orbital nuclear weapon system.

In addition to these developments, the Chinese threat against our population, as well as the danger of an accidental attack, cannot be ignored. By approving this system, it is possible to reduce U. S. fatalities to a minimal level in the event of a Chinese nuclear attack in the 1970's, or in an accidental attack from any source. No President with the responsibility for the lives and security for the American people could fail to provide this protection.

The gravest responsibility which I bear as President of the United States is for the security of the Nation. Our nuclear forces defend not only ourselves but our Allies as well. The imperative that our nuclear deterrent remain secure beyond any possible doubt requires that the U. S. must take steps now to insure that our strategic retaliatory forces will not become vulnerable to a Soviet attack.

Modern technology provides several choices in seeking to insure the survival of our retaliatory forces. First, we could increase the number of sea- and land-based missiles and bombers. I have ruled out this course because it provides only marginal improvement of our deterrent, while it could be misinterpreted by the Soviets as an attempt to threaten their deterrent. It would therefore stimulate an arms race.

A second option is to harden further our ballistic missile forces by putting them in more strongly reinforced underground silos. But our studies show that hardening by itself is not adequate protection against foreseeable advances in the accuracy of Soviet offensive forces.

The third option was to begin a measured construction on an active defense of our retaliatory forces.

I have chosen the third option.

The system will use components previously developed for the Sentinel system. However, the deployment will be changed to reflect the new concept. We will provide for local defense of selected Minuteman missile sites and an area

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defense designed to protect our bomber bases and our command and control authorities. In addition, this new system will provide a defense of the continental United States against an accidental attack and will provide substantial protection against the kind of attack which the Chinese Communists may be capable of launching throughout the 1970's. This deployment will not require us to place missile and radar sites close to our major cities.

The present estimate is that the total cost of installing this system will be $6-$7 billion. However, because of the deliberate pace of the deployment, budgetary requests for the coming year can be substantially less -- by about one half -- than those asked for by the previous Administration for the Sentinel system.

In making this decision, I have been mindful of my pledge to make every effort to move from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation. The program I am recommending is based on a careful assessment of the developing Soviet and Chinese threats. I have directed the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board -- a non-partisan group of distinguished private citizens -- to make a yearly assessment of the threat which will supplement our regular intelligence assessment. Each phase of the deployment will be reviewed to insure that we are doing as much as necessary but no more than that required by the threat existing at that time. Moreover, we will take maximum advantage of the information gathered from the initial deployment in designing the later phases of the program.

Since our deployment is to be closely related to the threat, it is subject to modification as the threat changes, either through negotiations or through unilateral actions by the Soviet Union or Communist China.

The program is not provocative. The Soviet retaliatory capability is not affected by our decision. The capability for surprise attack against our strategic forces is reduced. In other words, our program provides an incentive for a responsible Soviet weapons policy and for the avoidance of spiraling U. S. and Soviet strategic arms budgets.

I have taken cognizance of the view that beginning construction of a U. S. ballistic missile defense would complicate an agreement on strategic arms with the Soviet Union.

I do not believe that the evidence of the recent past bears out this contention. The Soviet interest in strategic talks was not deterred by the decision of the previous Administration to deploy the Sentinel ABM system -- in fact, it was formally announced shortly afterwards. I believe that the modifications we have made in the previous program will give the Soviet Union even less reason to view our defense effort as an obstacle to talks. Moreover, I wish to emphasize that in any arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union, the United States will be fully prepared to discuss limitations on defensive as well as offensive weapons systems.

The question of ABM involves a complex combination of many factors:

-- numerous, highly technical, often conflicting judgments;

-- the costs;

-- the relationship to prospects for reaching an agreement on limiting nuclear arms;

-- the moral implications the deployment of a ballistic missile defense system has for many Americans;

-- the impact of the decision on the security of the United States in this perilous age of nuclear arms.

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I have weighed all these factors. I am deeply sympathetic to the concerns of private citizens and Members of Congress that we do only that which is necessary for national security. This is why I am recommending a minimum program essential for our security. It is my duty as President to make certain that we do no less.

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